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a youth he went East with his brother, earning his way and absorbing knowledge of men and nature. As a young man he gradually established himself first as a teacher and then as a writer, feeling strong purposes take hold of him as he matured. As a man in the prime of life he was able to establish his aging parents in a position of comfort and happiness. In outline the story is as simple as possible, yet it is a wonderful story.

Out of it all there emerges a conception of life as a spectacle interesting in the large because of its picturesque and dramatic features, and at the same time as a business to be discharged soberly and earnestly. There emerges, too, a conception of vigorous and honest living and an ideal of literary expression as something vitally connected with real life and with genuine conviction. There is something unfeignedly optimistic in the tone of the whole narrative, despite its grimness in some particulars; a joy in homely and familiar things and a confidence in the right tendencies that ultimately control the world. Nothing could be more American than the mingling of practicality and idealism that is felt everywhere in the story. Nothing could be more wholesome in these times than the lesson of intellectual honesty and large sympathy which is implicit in it.

HIS OWN COUNTRY. By Paul Kester. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1917.

No theme is too difficult for the right author, and no doubt it is possible to make the Southern negro-problem the theme of a story as penetrating as dramatic, and by very much more tragic than sensational. This, however, Mr. Kester has not done. With very considerable talent, and with more than average knowledge of his subject-matter, he has written a strange and wonderful melodrama, at times verging on power, at times so crude as to be scarcely tolerable.

The central figure of *His Own Country* is a former slave, who as a physician in Montreal has accumulated a considerable fortune and gained a creditable reputation. Dr. Brent, after all, is only half-negro, and on the Caucasian side claims descent from one of the best families of Virginia. Married to a white wife, with sons and daughters educated abroad, himself associating upon equal terms with the white people of his adopted city, he feels justly confident of deserving respect. It is his dream to return as proprietor to the plantation where he had been a slave, and, as the result of a blindness to obvious facts which no amount of explanation serves to make quite plausible in a man of Brent's supposed intelligence, he looks forward to being received if not with open arms at least tolerantly by the old families of "Northmoreland County." The opportunity arises; the plan is carried through; the landed proprietors of Northmoreland, having organized themselves into a reception committee to greet the new owner of Comorn Hall as he disembarks from the steamer, discover that the newcomer is a negro.

Plainly, Dr. Brent had made a tragic mistake. With all possible ingenuity, Mr. Kester heaps the tragic consequences high upon the unfortunate Doctor and upon nearly all of those who are associated

with him. It is proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the position of a negro in such circumstances is difficult, that race prejudices are not easily overcome, that a rash and obstinate man may involve even well-meaning people in a ghastly situation. There is material enough here, surely, for a novel "big" enough to satisfy any one. But for good measure, Mr. Kester has woven into the plot the story of a high-minded young white man, John Brent of Brentwood, who has to endure the vilest slander. It is whispered that he is the son of a negro—indeed, that Dr. Brent himself is his father,—and John's mother, being insane, cannot confute the lie. The young man's purity of blood has to be vindicated in the end, of course, and the author's resourcefulness is quite equal to the task.

There are moments in the story when Dr. Brent almost becomes convincing as a human being and impressive as a victim of fate; there are times when his rôle as a half-benevolent, half-vindictive agitator on behalf of the rights of his race seems real and significant. The man has qualities—when he is himself and not a mere creature of the plot. Sometimes, too, Mr. Kester's delineation of traits is really engaging—though most of his characters are far too garrulous. The humor of the poor whites who figure in the tale is now and then natural and amusing, despite a certain sameness, and despite the dismal background of their lives that makes humor at their expense almost questionable, unmingled as it is with more than a very easy-going sympathy.

But on the whole, all the good qualities of the tale are subordinated to the requirements of a highly melodramatic plot. One example of the author's method will perhaps suffice. There is among the minor characters a negress who has frequent attacks of coma or trance. She is terribly afraid that during one of these fits she may be buried alive. Just what relation this has to the story is not at first evident. But the woman's usefulness appears when she at last dies and the negroes of her household hide some stolen money in her coffin. Later the body is exhumed that the money may be recovered. If one is extremely indulgent, one may admit that the loss and recovery of the money is managed in a proper manner; but it is difficult to invent any theory that will excuse the author for having made the body move in the grave. This touch of superfluous horror is crudely shocking, and nothing more.

THE REBIRTH OF RUSSIA. By Isaac F. Marcossou. New York: John Lane Company, 1917.

It is frankly as a journalistic work that Mr. Marcossou offers his book to the public. This it is, and more than this it could hardly be. Mr. Marcossou gives his readers a spirited and trustworthy account of the happenings of the crowded days of the Revolution in Russia—an account somewhat summary in treatment, somewhat rhetorical in style, but informing and filled with significant or striking incidents.

Occasionally the author throws out interesting suggestions as to the conditions that determined the surprisingly sane and patriotic temper of the revolutionists. One such condition was the war. Soon after the Cossacks had gone over to the popular side in Petrograd, there was